

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Charlie Charlie

Internet Enamored with Occult Game

By Paul Asay

What Happened

Forget LOLcats or people pouring ice on their heads. Today's biggest Internet stars are allegedly Mexican demons, and they want to sit down and chat for a spell.

They're supposedly the focal point for the Charlie Charlie Challenge, a spooky game that has exploded online. Participants—mainly teens—take two pencils and lay one on top of the other so they form a cross on top of a sheet of paper. They then write Yes and No in the resulting quadrants and ask Charlie if he can play.

If the pencil moves to point to one of the Yes quadrants, then participants start asking Charlie—said to be a Mexican demon—questions. Once they're done asking, they need to ask Charlie for permission to stop. Otherwise, he might hang around. The consequences, it is said, may be quite grave indeed.

The game taps into the same creepy occult vibe as the Ouija board, wherein players ask ghostly spirits to answer questions—sometimes spelling out the answers. Most folks believe there's nothing more at work with Charlie Charlie than simple gravity. When you balance two pencils as players do, of course it's eventually going to move.

Also, Mexican folklorists say Charlie is a really strange name for a Mexican demon. "In Mexican mythology, you can find gods with names such as Tlaltecuhli or Tezcatlipoca in the Nahuatl language," says Maria Elena Navez of BBC Mundo, "but if this legend began after the Spanish conquest, I'm sure it would've been called Carlitos (Charlie in Spanish)."

If the Charlie Charlie Challenge is based on a lot of nonsense, many Christians warn that calling on the supernatural at any time is inherently problematic. "Actually asking an evil spirit, or a demon as he's variously referred to, to engage with us directly is playing with supernatural fire," writes Martin Saunders for *Christian Today*.

Saunders also finds the phenomenon curious for another reason. Though our culture is growing more secular, teens still are seeking answers from supernatural forces. "Why," he asks, "when young people are so naturally intrigued by the supernatural, do they default to a magical way of supposedly contacting the dead, rather than wanting to contact a spiritual force who's very much alive?"

Talk About It

Have you done the Charlie Charlie Challenge? Do you know of people who have? Do they believe it's tapping into forces beyond the grave? Did the game scare them?

Do you believe it's possible to connect with the supernatural? Are there dangers in trying to? What are they?

Regardless of whether we've taken the Charlie Charlie Challenge or played with a Ouija board, there's something about the supernatural and the occult that seems to

intrigue us. Why are people so fascinated by the occult? Is it unhealthy? Could it be a sign of searching for some spiritual answers, albeit in the wrong places?

What the Bible Says

“Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:31).

“When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. Because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you” (Deut. 18:9-13).

“When they say to you, ‘Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,’ should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?” (Isa. 8:19).

Paul Asay has written for *Time*, *The Washington Post* and *Christianity Today*. He writes about culture for *Plugged In* and has published several books, including his newest, *Burning Bush 2.0* (Abingdon), available now. He lives in Colorado Springs. Check out his entertainment blog at Patheos.com/Blogs/WatchingGod or follow him on Twitter at [@AsayPaul](https://twitter.com/AsayPaul).